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STATE FOR S/I, DOJ FOR CRIMINAL DIVISION (DAAG BRUCE SWARTZ) AND CRIMINAL DIVISION OIA (MOLLY WARLOW AND AMY OLSON)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [FR](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FRENCH "OIL FOR FOOD" INVESTIGATING JUDGE SEEKS USG ASSISTANCE

REF: STATE 7844

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT, FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

**¶1.** (C) Summary: Investigating judge Philippe Courroye met with Poloffs January 24 to request USG assistance regarding his planned trip to Baghdad to question four Iraqi nationals (including Tariq Aziz and Saddam Hussein) in his investigation into the UN's "oil for food" corruption scandal. Courroye said he had the full support of the French and Iraqi governments but wanted to make sure the USG was aware of his request. Courroye also updated Poloffs on his investigation, which has targeted several high-profile French citizens, including Charles Pasqua, ex-Interior Minister, and former senior French diplomats. End summary.

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COURROYE'S PLANNED TRIP TO IRAQ AND ACTION REQUEST  
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**¶2.** (C) High-profile financial investigating judge Philippe Courroye is in charge of the French judiciary's inquiry into the "oil for food" scandal. He is investigating several French nationals, including ex-Interior Minister Charles Pasqua, former French Ambassador to the UN Jean-Bernard Merimee, former MFA Secretary General Serge Boidevaix (diplomatic advisor to then-PM Chirac in the 1970s) and Patrick Maugein (a reputed confidante of President Chirac). Recently Courroye flew to Lebanon, where he questioned Lebanese lawyer Elias Firzli, who he described as "key" to his investigation and an intermediary between the former Iraqi regime and "OFF" kickback recipients.

**¶3.** (C) In order to arrive at a conclusion "without question marks," Courroye told Poloffs that he needed to question four Iraqi nationals: Taha Yassin Ramadan, Amer Rashid, Tariq Aziz, and Saddam Hussein. Of these, Courroye said Aziz would probably be the most important, as the former Iraq FM had led efforts to subvert OFF to reward overseas political supporters. He said he had the support of the French and Iraqi governments, but wanted to contact the USG as well to inform us of his request because of the USG role in detaining the Iraqi nationals. Ideally, said Courroye, he would like to travel to Baghdad sometime in late February or early March. He anticipated that he would require a maximum of four days in Baghdad. Poloffs said we would convey this information to Washington.

**¶4.** (C) ACTION REQUEST: Per reftel (para 10), French Ambassador to Iraq Bajolet raised Courroye's request with S/I Ambassador Jeffrey on January 4. Please advise whether any

decision has been made regarding facilitating Courroye's access to Iraq detainees. We note that Bajolet did not request access to Saddam Hussein in his discussion with S/I Jeffrey. END ACTION REQUEST.

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"OIL FOR FOOD" UPDATE  
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¶ 5. (C) Courroye said his oil for food investigation was progressing, but he needed the testimony of Iraqi officials before coming to any definitive conclusions. As an example, he said ex-Interior Minister Pasqua has denied any involvement in the corruption scandal despite a clear money trail. Pasqua blamed this money trail on unscrupulous Iraqi officials who were using his name. Courroye said it was easy to blame Iraq officials if they were in jail in Iraq and unable to refute Pasqua's arguments. In addition, he said his trip to Lebanon to question Firzli had been very important; indeed, Firzli had fled to Lebanon when he had heard that Courroye was looking for him. Courroye said he was leaving for New York this week to consult with the Volcker commission.

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Stapleton